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Inside Information

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MEAT AND POULTRY HOTLINE OPENS JULY 1

After years of providing food safety advice when the caller paid long-distance charges and then a three-state test of providing such information toll-free, USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service opens a national toll-free hotline for meat and poultry questions July 1.

The program was outlined June 25 at a meeting of the department's Public Affairs Council by Laura Fox, of the Public Awareness staff of FSIS.

The number to call is 800-535-4555, except in the District of Columbia area, where it is 447-3333.

The phones will be manned 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays by three home economists hired by FSIS.

Fox said they received 2,000 calls each year during the toll-paying years. When they put a toll-free system into trial operation in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Kentucky last fall, she said that more than 60 percent of the people who called said they would not have called if they had to pay. Now, on a national scale, Fox said, they expect to get 24,000 calls a year.

Ben Blankenship, whose Economics Management Staff once manned a toll-free hotline for farmers, said they were getting 10,000 calls a month until they cut off the service because system costs suddenly doubled.

He guessed FSIS's hotline would garner many more calls than expected.

There will be some problems, Fox predicted. For instance, keeping the hours of operation at 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Eastern Standard or Daylight Time might give the West Coast too little time to participate. Hawaii and Alaska are part of the service system, too.

Further, the public may be put off when some discover they will have to make another call to the Food and Drug Administration to get an answer to a question about some particular food when it does not concern meat and poultry. Callers with milk problems, for instance, will be referred to FDA and those with fish questions will be asked to call the Department of Commerce.

USDA TV SHOWS AVAILABLE TWICE WEEKLY

Some folks had trouble accessing USDA's television shows during the exact time they were available by satellite, so USDA is making them available twice a week.

"When we started using satellite to distribute our television services," explained Jim Johnson, chief of the Radio and Television Division of USDA's Office of Information, "the downlink dishes of a number of stations were tied up accessing other programs from another satellite or transponder during the time our materials were available.

Johnson's new schedule calls for original distribution from 1 p.m. to 2:15 p.m. EDT every Friday. The same programs will be repeated Tuesdays from 10:45 a.m. to Noon EDT.

The schedule may be accessed on Westar IV, Transponder 10X, Audio 6.2 or 6.8.

"We want all of our subscribers on satellite rather than videotape," Johnson said, "because the savings on duplication and distribution can be appreciable."

USDA programs available on satellite are: "A Better Way," "Down to Earth," and "USDA News."

SPECIAL FARM BRIEFING ATTRACTS MEDIA

North Carolina State communicators brought what they termed the "farm crisis" closer to home recently with a special briefing for the media on the state of agriculture in North Carolina.

Four university economists provided a 90-minute briefing plus time for questions and interviews.

Some 35 newspaper, radio, and television people attended.

"Coverage was extensive and included news reports, editorials, columns and features," reports Tom Byrd, of NCSU's Department of Agricultural Communication, which planned the briefing. "Many of those attending have called upon the economists later for help with subsequent stories."

One editorial writer, Carol Collier Dykers of the Charlotte Observer, observed:

"I had read much about the farm crises nationally but did not know the facts about the North Carolina situation. The presentations at NCSU were realistic and gave me a better perspective."

CAROLINA RADIO PROGRAM WINS AWARD

The North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service has won a second place national award for outstanding reporting on economic issues.

An extension radio program, "The Economic Perspective" was one of 26 entries selected out of more than 1,500 submissions for a Champion-Tuck Award.

Extension radio producer Reese Edwards and extension economist Mike Walden, who are responsible for the program, received a \$2,500 prize in ceremonies in New York.

"The Economic Perspective" is a radio tape service distributed to 148 stations in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, and Virginia.

The winning entry was a four-part series explaining pollution as an economic issue.

USDA'S PRINTING PLANT BEING PHASED OUT

By Oct. 1, 1986, USDA's in-house printing plant will be closed down after a reported 94 years in existence--by order of the Office of Management and Budget.

Meanwhile, services will be reduced in a manner to be explained in a forthcoming memo from the plant's management, the Office of Operations, and USDA's Office of Information.

Current employment of 34 will be reduced to 11 by Oct. 1, 1985, and finally to zero a year later.

OMB's goal is to redirect the plant's work to private contractors.

Just about all of USDA's agencies have used the plant at one time or another. Its specialty in recent years was quick turnaround capability, though at one time it was a full-fledged printing shop employing about 100 people.

HILT IS PRESIDENT OF DC REGION OF ACE

Marci Hilt, public affairs specialist who handles television liaison for the News Division of USDA's Office of Information, was sworn in June 26 as president of the District of Columbia Region of Agricultural Communicators in Education.

She succeeds Russ Forte, public affairs specialist in the Special Programs Division of USDA's OI.

Also elected in the DC Region were: Betty Fleming, teleconference coordinator in the Video and Film Division of USDA's OI, vice president; Carolyn Bigwood, writer/editor in the Information and Communications staff of Extension Service, secretary, and Ruth Coy, Publications Branch editor on the Information staff of the Agricultural Research Service, treasurer.

DON ELDER HONORED BY EMMY'S TEAM

Don Elder, producer of USDA's television show, "A Better Way," was honored recently by the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences for having served six years (three terms) as a member of its board of governors.

During his years on the board, 1978 to 1984, Elder served in various capacities, including chair of the judging panel for documentaries in the Emmy Award competition; as seminar chairman, and as producer of several international events. He is the only Federal employee to have served on the academy's board.

OICD HAS AN OPENING

July 1 is the closing date to apply for an opening as a public affairs specialist (GS-1035-7/9) in USDA's Office of International Cooperation and Development.

They're looking for someone to write press releases, speeches, and feature articles. Applicant must request supplemental information from: Evelyn Henderson, Room 3118 of the Auditors Building, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. Her telephone number is (202) 475-3649.

PAC PLANS ANNOUNCED

USDA's Public Affairs Council, comprising the top information officers from each agency in the department, will make a field trip outside Washington, D.C.'s Beltway July 9 to visit the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center in Beltsville, Maryland.

Hubert Kelley, director of information at the Agricultural Research Service, will be host. Those attending will leave by bus from the Department's Administration building at 10 a.m. and return after lunch.

Meanwhile, Kevin Murray, deputy director of USDA's Office of Information has asked each agency to outline the structure of their information staffs, so that the PAC can discuss them at its Aug. 6 meeting. Murray said some agency information shops had considered reorganizing and were wondering how others were set up.

There will be no PAC meeting July 23. The group usually meets every second Tuesday.

MARYLAND SEEKS COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

The Cooperation Extension Service at the University of Maryland is looking for an experienced communicator with at least a master's degree to head up its Office of Information and Publications.

Applications are being accepted until Aug. 1. Send resume, transcripts, and three letters of reference to: Dr. Dennis Westoff, chairman of the search committee, Department of Animal Sciences, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland 20742.

EMS INFORMATION RELOCATED

Here are some key phone numbers for the Information Division of USDA's Economic Management Staff, which moves June 29 from the GHI building on 12th Street in Southwest Washington, D.C. to 1301 New York Avenue NW, in the same city:

Ben Blankenship, director: 786-1504; Kent Miller, chief of current information: 786-1494; Jim Sayre, chief of research information: 786-1512.

YEARBOOK SUBJECTS UNDER STUDY

The Yearbook Subject Review Committee of USDA's Office of Information has completed its study of subjects suggested by various USDA agencies for the 1986 Yearbook of Agriculture and submitted recommendations to Wilmer D. Mizell, Assistant Secretary for Governmental and Public Affairs.

Mizell will discuss the recommendations with Secretary Block.

John J. Crowley, of Special Programs Division of USDA's Office of information, has been named editor of the 1986 Yearbook. His telephone number is (202) 447-8181, and is reachable on AGR009 on the Dialcom system.

INSIDE INFORMATION is published for distribution to public affairs and information staff members of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, its agencies, state departments of agriculture and land grant universities. Any items, comments and inquiries should be addressed to either John Crowley or Nancy Bevis, Office of Information, Room 536A, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250 or to AGR009 mailbox on the Dialcom system, or call (202) 447-7454.

